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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN, S/SRAP FOR KAREN HANRAHAN, SCA/A FOR ARIELLA VIEHE, AND EUR/RPM FOR AARON COPE

AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO USOFFICE ALMATY

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

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SUBJECT: Uzbekistan Responds to Afghanistan Demarche

REF: STATE 74362

CLASSIFIED BY: Steven Prohaska, Second Secretary, State, Pol-Econ;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) On July 22, Charge d'Affaires and Poloff delivered reftel demarche on assistance to Afghanistan to Uzbekistan's new MFA Americas Department Chief Bakhtiyor Ibragimov and Acting MFA USA Desk Chief Nurillo Abdullaev. Charge asked Uzbekistan to provide Post with a document outlining Uzbekistan's various contributions to stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, perhaps including any new initiatives that Uzbekistan would like to pursue in this regard. Ibragimov responded favorably, indicating that a document that shows the importance of Uzbekistan's contributions would be useful, and pledged to send us specific figures on bilateral trade and Uzbekistan's economic assistance. He indicated that MFA will peruse the non-paper and stated that Uzbekistan is doing its utmost to help its neighbor. Uzbekistan is very interested in restoring peace to Afghanistan, which it hopes will facilitate greater regional trade and commerce.

¶2. (C) Ibragimov cited Afghanistan as an important area for U.S.-Uzbek cooperation. He expressed Uzbekistan's appreciation for U.S. support of the extended rail line between Hayraton and Mazar-i-Sharif, noting that he knew the United States had approached the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on this matter. Charge said that ADB is finishing its feasibility study and anticipates complete construction of the 80-km rail line by October 2010.

¶3. (C) Charge raised U.S. concerns about excessive delays in approving the shipment of Northern Distribution Network (NDN)-related cargo across Uzbekistan's borders. Ibragimov said that he had reported the U.S.'s transit concerns to Foreign Minister Norov, and that all GOU ministries are now looking at how to expedite the processing of this cargo. "I assure you, this issue will be resolved soon," Ibragimov pledged. Uzbekistan will come up with a solution to avoid excessive approval times and the problem will not resurface, he said.

BUTCHER